



Charlotte Mason's House of Education,
Scale How, Ambleside, UK, 2009

The **Charlotte Mason Digital Collection** is a not-for-profit database created in 2009-2011 to assist scholars, researchers, educators and students to discover, use, and build upon the Charlotte Mason Collection of archives, journals and books housed in the Armitt Library & Museum (UK). To learn more about this database or to search the digital collection, go to [The Charlotte Mason Digital Collection](#).

Your use of images from the **Charlotte Mason Digital Collection** is subject to a [License](#). To publish images for commercial purposes, a license fee must be submitted and permission received prior to publication. To publish or present images for non-profit purposes, the owner, Redeemer University College, must be notified at cmdc@redeemer.ca and submission of a copy of the context in which it was used also must be submitted to the owner at cmdc@redeemer.ca. Credit lines, as specified in the [License](#), must accompany both the commercial and non-profit use of each image.

Unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal nor may you make multiple copies of any of the digital images. Higher resolution images are available. [Low resolution (150 dpi), single copy printing is permitted: High resolution images for publication can be purchased. Please contact Redeemer University College in writing as specified in the [License](#) to request high resolution images.

While the document originals are housed in the Armitt Library & Museum, Redeemer University College owns the rights to the Digital Images (in jpg/pdf format) of the original archival documents and artifacts. The original Digital Images and database metadata are owned and maintained by Redeemer University College. Multiple images are bound together in PDF Packages. Click [here](#) to download the latest version of Adobe Reader for better viewing. In the PDF, click an image thumbnail to view it.

This project was made possible through collaboration among the [Armitt Library & Museum](#) (Ambleside, UK), [Redeemer University College](#) (Ancaster, Canada) and the [University of Cumbria](#) (UK) and with the financial assistance of the [Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada](#).

Need help? If you do **not** see a side-bar with image thumbnails:

Some of the PDF packages are large and will take some time to download. A very large PDF package may open more successfully if you download it first to your desktop. (From inside the database record, right-click on the link to the PDF package and save the link to your desktop.) Once it's on your desktop, you can open it up with a recent version of [Adobe Reader](#).

If you have a Macintosh with Safari, the default program to open PDFs is Preview, which does not open the PDF packets. Mac users need to download [Adobe Reader](#). If this cover page appears without a list of PDF files (either at the side or bottom of the screen), look for a paper clip or a menu option to view attachments. If you click that, you should see a list of the pages in the PDF package.

Viewing files with Linux: This works with the default PDF viewer that comes pre-installed with Ubuntu. While viewing this cover page in the PDF viewer, click "View" on the top toolbar, and check the box that says "Side Panel". That will bring up the side panel. The side panel will show only this cover page. Click the 'arrow' at the top of the side panel, and it will give you the option to view "attachments." If you click that, you should see a list of PDF files, which are the pages in the PDF package.



THE
PARENTS' REVIEW

A MONTHLY MAGAZINE

OF HOME-TRAINING AND CULTURE.

"Education is an atmosphere, a discipline, a life."

THE POSITION OF PLAY IN A SYSTEM
OF RATIONAL EDUCATION.

PART I.

BY J. STRACHAN, ESQ., M.D.

I FEAR that the title which I have given to this lecture may appear to some of you somewhat of a contradiction, as it is usually considered that play and education are antithetical, and altogether outside and apart from one another. It may be thought, therefore, that play can have no place *in* an educational system, although it may be allowed to stand alongside of it. Most persons admit that there ought to be play as well as education, at all events for boys, as—

"All work and no play
Makes Jack a dull boy."

(there is no mention of Jill in this connection), but the usual motto is "work first and play afterwards,"—

"Work while you work, play while you play,
That is the way to be happy and gay."

My object, however, is to shew that there is no such antithesis as is here assumed—that, on the contrary, the two are, according to nature, very intimately associated and cannot be properly dealt with separately. To enable us to realise this it is necessary that we first consider the question of what is—

RATIONAL EDUCATION.

The plain English meaning of the term is, of course, a system founded upon and conducted with reason and judgment, to the exclusion of all arbitrary and conventional procedure.

Such would, probably, be claimed with regard to most systems, but a consideration of the grounds upon which this reason and judgment must be based will, I think, considerably limit its applicability.

By the educational basis we must understand the organic and vital means by which we may attain to the educational object we have in view; or, in other words, the machinery and motive power we have got to work with in obtaining the required educational product. It is evident that this must be a primary consideration; and that all procedure with a view to obtaining an educational result, whether pure mental culture or simply to passing examinations, must be based upon and be in harmony with the structure and mode of action of the mechanism in question. It is certain that in any process of human manufacture this would be looked upon as the only *rational* position to take up; and the adjective has exactly the same signification and limitation when applied to the organic mechanism concerned in education.

With the actual machinery of mind—the brain structure, which is the source of all mental power—we do not require to concern ourselves. It is sufficient for us to know that it has come from and, in the case of the child, is still, so to speak, in the hands of the most perfect artificer, and that it is worked from within by an intelligence fully acquainted with every detail of structure and requirement. What we have to do with is the resulting activity which it is the province of the educator to turn to the best account in view of the coming life.

We have first, then, to recognize the fact that education of the young is no modern invention, and is, indeed, no pedagogic imposition. It came into being when first there appeared upon this earth a race of creatures endowed with a brain organization capable of knowing, thinking, reasoning, and speaking. Such endowment would have become altogether thrown away and been lost to the world in the hour of its inception, had it not been accompanied by an inherent system of education tending to bring organization into relation with external conditions, and to furnish and develop the mental powers.

A special instinctive prompting is an essential accompaniment of all organization depending for action upon external relations. The wing of the bird would be entirely useless

without such instruction as to its action in flight; the digestive powers of the stomach would be inoperative but for the corresponding system of feeding which prompts and regulates the supply of appropriate food; and the mental powers of the brain must have remained in abeyance had they not been prompted from within to all action necessary to their development. At all times and all stages of his existence man has imbibed food and drink according to his requirements, so, also, he has fed and exercised his mind according to his abilities and opportunities. By virtue of this instinctive educational activity the human mind attained to very high power of thought thousands of years before lesson-books, as we understand them, were invented. All the ancient and mediæval heroes and makers of history, and not a few of the world's greatest benefactors of modern times, up even to the time of Board Schools, owed their intellectual pre-eminence entirely to this natural and spontaneous education. Not only so, but by far the larger part of the knowledge and intellectual powers of each and all of us we owe to the spontaneous activity of our receptive faculties imbibing and assimilating from all means of information by which we are and have been surrounded. We cannot doubt, then, that our Maker, in providing us with a brain organization capable of high mental development, has provided also a natural means of ensuring, in all respects, that development up to the highest limits of potentiality. We are not, therefore, required to invent or construct an educational system, but only to study, guide and minister to one in full operation in every healthy child. Such I hold to be the only possible basis for the application of reason and judgment with regard to education in the young.

I have already referred to the stomach in this connection, and at the risk of offending your sense of the fitness of things, I shall now draw the parallel between feeding the stomach and feeding or instructing the mind. There is a natural repugnance to placing these in any way upon the same level, the one being common to all animals, and the other dealing with the highest attribute of man. But, as has been wisely said, "Analogy is the guide of life." Nature is no respecter of organs, being as solicitous for the well-being of the human brain as for that of the digestive apparatus of man or of the

meanest creature. All organs alike are created self-acting and self-regulating according to conditions which we have no power to gauge, far less to control. There being this important analogy between the stomach and the receptive mental faculty, that each is directly dependent for its action upon pabulum received from without; there is the further analogy that each is, of necessity, guided in the reception of pabulum by instinctive promptings, specially designed to regulate, according to organic condition, the kind and quantity suitable at any particular time. In this respect the action of the two run upon parallel lines, and the reasoning applicable in the one case applies equally in the other. In the case of the stomach these promptings are called taste and appetite; in that of the mind they are *interest* and *attention*. Every animal is guided by the sense of taste or, which is much the same, smell, as to the kinds of food suitable to its digestive and assimilative powers; and it is directed by appetite when and how much to eat. So, in the case of the mind, suitable pabulum, or knowledge presented in suitable form, is more or less interesting, and attention naturally turns to it when and so long as the action is salutary. In each case action so prompted is accompanied, especially in the young, by a feeling of pleasure which ceases when a sufficiency, for the time, has been received. These are absolutely the only indications as to what is suitable in the way of pabulum, and the only rational ground upon which we can judge in administering it.

This does not mean, however, that none should be given for which, in its crude state, the stomach or the mind has no natural liking, as much may be done in the way of adaptation in either case. Raw potatoes are very unpalatable, because indigestible; but, by cooking and flavouring, potatoes may be rendered very acceptable. So certain subjects of study as presented in the school book are, no doubt, most uninteresting, and no child can really give the attention to them. But these same subjects may be so presented by the living voice of the teacher, aided by pictorial and other illustrations, as to be extremely interesting, and so to attract and rivet the attention. In such adaptation, along with a due regard to times and quantities as indicated by attention, consist the science and the art of rational teaching.

If the mere reception of pabulum were sufficient for our purpose, we might, both in feeding and in teaching, get along in a laborious way by coercive means, without troubling ourselves about adaptation. It would not be very difficult, with the aid of punishments and prizes, to induce children to swallow raw potatoes; and, in like manner, we may compel them, through the will, to look and to listen, and so to receive certain verbal formulæ into the sense record or memory. We cannot command the appetite or the attention, but we may thus give the appearance of feeding and of teaching without them. There, however, in each case, all power of compulsion ends. We cannot compel the stomach to digest raw potatoes, and we cannot compel the mind to assimilate uninteresting matter. Without such power, cramming the stomach or the memory is far worse than useless, as it interferes seriously with true nutrition and learning. In this connection I may state here my opinion, although I do not wish to appear to dictate in this matter, that, in no case, is the printed form the most suitable for presenting knowledge to the young mind. It is the visual symbol of spoken language, and, with adults, has, by long practice, become as familiar as its prototype. With the child, however, reading is a comparatively recent acquisition, and still requires, more or less, a process of translation before it can be understood. This, at best, is an unnecessary and burdensome hindrance to the process of learning. In very many cases the child does not attempt, or is incapable of, any translation, and is content—the teacher being content—with a mere reception or committal to memory of the word sounds. This is the explanation of the absurd mistakes so often made by school children, and with which teachers sometimes amuse their friends and the public, oblivious, apparently, of how they reflect upon their method of teaching. A good example of this came under my own observation at a school examination last June. A boy, on being told to repeat a certain text of scripture, gave it as—"Watch and pray, lest ye enter into the kingdom of Heaven." This was received with laughter, and as showing the strange perversity of the child's mind. But will any one say what is the educational value of phrases so learned, whether or not they be correctly repeated? Could such a mistake possibly

have occurred from the oral teaching, in appropriate language, of the meaning of that text? I am strongly of opinion that all lesson-books, except those for the practice of reading, should be kept exclusively for the use of the teacher, the contents, properly cooked and flavoured, so to speak, being conveyed by his living voice to the pupil.

Even suitable pabulum can be administered, with advantage, only in limited quantities and with proper intervals. We cannot go on stuffing food into the child continuously for hours together and expect it to be digested. We must consider the capacity of the stomach and its powers of digestion at the time of the food being taken, and our only possible guide in this respect is the appetite. When that is satisfied sufficient has been taken for the time, according to digestive power, and we must, perforce, wait till the stomach is ready for another meal as indicated by a return of appetite; except that custom, founded upon this fact, has fixed the meal hours at appropriate intervals. So it is with the receptive powers of the mind. They cannot, any more than the stomach, go on continuously taking in fresh pabulum. Just as the appetite palls when as much food has been taken as can be properly dealt with, so attention flags when a sufficient diet of mental pabulum, in the form of fresh knowledge and ideas, has been imbibed. As with appetite, so with attention, it is the only possible guide as to what constitutes a sufficient diet according to organic condition at the time. We can stimulate appetite by rendering food very savoury; and so, no doubt, the degree of attention will be according to the interest of the subject as taught. Still, in the one case as in the other, satiety means that sufficient has been received of the kind presented. The child has no more control over attention than he has over appetite, each being regulated by organic conditions in relation to pabulum quite apart from the will.

So much for the mere reception of pabulum by the stomach and by the mind, but the analogy does not end here. In either case the pabulum is in the form of raw material, which, before it can be made any use of, must be elaborated and vitalized by a process totally beyond our power to control in any way. If there could be degrees of the impossible the assimilative mental process might be held to be even further

beyond the region of our interference than the analogous digestion and assimilation of food, in the sense that it is further removed from the sphere of our knowledge and understanding. We do know something of the mechanism and the process of digestion,—of the conversion of dead food into living blood; but we are utterly and completely in the dark regarding the action of the brain cells in the assimilation and exercise of ideas. We can judge of this only from its manifestation in the talk and conduct of the child. In that, however, we have ample evidence of spontaneous activity, tending to the permanent location of the new ideas, as living and active items in the psychical brain power. I cannot better illustrate this and other points than by a short extract from M. Gouin's book,—“The Art of Teaching and Studying Languages” (p. 37):—

“One day the mother said to the child, ‘Would you like to come along with me? I am going to the mill; you have never seen a mill, it will amuse you.’ I was present; I heard the proposition; and the words, ‘you have never seen a mill,’ recalled my watchword to me.

“The little lad went along with his mother. He went over the mill from top to bottom. He wanted to see everything, to hear the name of everything, to understand about everything. Everything had to be explained to him. He went up everywhere, went into every corner, stopped before the tick-tack, listening long in mute astonishment. He curiously examined the bolters, the millstones, the hoppers. He made the men open the flour-store; he pulled back the curtain of the bran room, admired the turning of the pans and belts, gazed with a sort of dread at the rotation of the shafting, and the gearing of the cog-wheels, watched the action of the levers, the pulleys, the cranes lifting through space the sacks stuffed full of wheat. All the time his eyes eagerly followed the millers, whitened with flour, moving about here and there, loading and unloading sacks, emptying some, filling others, stopping the motion of the wheels, silencing one clattering wheel, and then starting another.

“Finally the child was led to the great water-wheels outside. He lingered long in ecstasy before these indefatigable workers, and before the mighty, splashing column of water, which, issuing from the mill-pond, already full to overflowing, rushed white with foam along the mill-race, fell in roaring torrents into the floats of the water-wheel, setting and keeping in motion with thunderous roar the giant wheels, with all this immense and marvellous mechanism turning at full speed beneath their impulsion, driving, devouring the work with a bewildering rapidity.

“He came away deafened, stunned, astounded, and went back home absorbed in thought. He pondered continually over what he had seen, striving to digest this vast and prolonged perception. I kept my eyes upon him, wondering what could be passing within him, what use he

was going to make of this newly acquired knowledge, and, above all, how he was going to express it.

"In the child the intellectual digestion, like the physical digestion, operates rapidly. This is doubtless owing to the fact that it never overloads its imagination any more than its digestive organs.

"At the end of an hour he had shaken off his burden. Speech returned. He manifested an immense desire to recount to everybody what he had seen. So he told his story, and told it again and again ten times over, always with variants, forgetting some of the details, returning on his track to repair his forgetfulness, and passing from fact to fact, from phrase to phrase, by the same familiar transition, 'and then . . . and then . . .' He was still digesting, but now it was on his own account; I mean, he did not stay to think any further over his perception; he was conceiving it, putting it in order, moulding it into a conception of his own.

"After the discourse came the action; after Saying came Doing. He tormented his mother till she had made him half a dozen little sacks; he tormented his uncle till he had built him a mill. He led the way to a tiny streamlet of water near by, and here, whether I would or no, I had to dig a mill-race, make a waterfall, drive in two supports, smooth two flat pieces of wood, find a branch of willow, cut two clefts in it, stick two pallets in these clefts; in short, manufacture a simulacrum of a large wheel, and then, lastly, place this wheel beneath the waterfall, and arrange it so that it would turn and the mill would work.

"The uncle lent himself with great willingness to all these fantasies, and acquitted himself in the enterprise as well as he could. During all this time I watched each movement of the importunate little fellow attentively. I noted each of his words, each of his reflections, striving to read the interior thought through the work or the external preoccupation.

"When the mill was definitely mounted and set agoing, the little miller filled his sacks with sand, loaded them on his shoulder with a simulated effort accompanied with a grimace; then, bent and grunting beneath the weight, carried his grain to the mill, shot it out and ground it, so reproducing the scene of the real mill—not as he had seen it, but as he had afterwards 'conceived' it to himself, as he had 'generalised' it."

Here we have the whole process of rational instruction and of spontaneous assimilation and exercise graphically detailed. The visit to the mill may be regarded as an object lesson on rather a large scale,—evidently of a thoroughly *interesting* kind to the boy, and occupying, probably, about half-an-hour. To all that was shown and explained to him the attention was keenly directed. All his senses were brought actively to bear, conveying their impressions separately to the memory, where each remains as a picture or exact representation, but in a conjoined stream of ideas to the mind, forming a combined concept of the whole, and all to an accompaniment of keen delight. The same information presented in printed form, *a la* the lesson-book, would have

been, of a certainty, rejected, or, under compulsion, laboriously committed to memory without ever reaching the *mind* at all, and nothing more would have been heard of it. On the other hand grammar, geography, mathematics, and all other school subjects, if presented in a similar way to the above lesson by the living voice of the teacher, supplemented by all available sense aids, as pictures, models, maps, etc., would be received with equal avidity.

But all that is, as it were, the mere planting of the seed. Like the seed, the idea or concept must take root and grow before resulting thought can be expected from it. Had the lad been immediately hurried off to another and different kind of mill, and then to another, and another, and another, for some five or six consecutive hours, all that he had seen and been told in the first would, probably, have passed from his mind leaving no permanent result. But what do we find? After the lesson there is a period of incubation, during which the brain cells are busy with the new ideas which have been planted amongst them, and which are there taking root and sprouting into life. After an hour these are in vigorous action, working themselves into place along with allied ideas already existing, and finding expression, as with all childish thought, in talk and prattle. Such talk, spontaneous and almost irrepressible, is the sure sign of the knowledge, sought to be implanted, having actually taken root, and so become a permanent, living and active psychical entity. Of ideas so formed and arising from the many objects and events which come under the observation and attract the attention, either casually, in the course of life and conversation, or of set purpose in the way of educational instruction, is the mind composed; beginning as the earliest dawn of intellect, when the whole thinking power may consist of one or two ideas,—as of an object falling to the ground, the production of sound by the rattle or the ticking of a watch,—and accumulating by slow but steady process, till soon they swarm in the brain like bees in a hive, not mere dead pictures of what has been seen and heard, as in the memory, to be reproduced in set form when required, but living, active, *busy bees*, each capable of looking after its own well-being, but all working together harmoniously under the control of the various faculties in the production of thought.

(To be continued.)